Sandy was telling me about your first G–7 conference, which I don't expect you to talk about on the record, but he was telling me about how the Japanese were lecturing you about how to run an economy. And when you took office, most people believed that we were going to get taken to the cleaners by the Japanese and the Germans, because they were homogenous and we were mongrels. And now most people—you know, most of those Archie Bunkers out in Queens have a niece or a nephew who is dating a Puerto Rican at this point. And most people——

The President. Or an Indian or a Pakistani. I went to a school in Queens the other day, and I mean, I thought I was—there was one guy there, I could swear the kid was from Mongolia. There were a lot of East Asians. There were a lot of South Asians. There were all the Puerto Ricans. There were all the other Latins, you know.

But the test that—that's not over, but I think people are beginning to feel good about it.

Mr. Klein. Well, I mean, kids my kids' age, your kid's age, think it's a positive value.

The President. It is a positive value. It makes life more interesting. I keep telling everybody, the trick is to figure out how to respect all these people's—other people's traditions, religions, the whole thing, cherish your own, and then—but the only way to make it work, which is why I keep citing this human genome finding that we're 99.9 percent the same, is to realize that the differences make life interesting, but the similarities are fundamental.

If you can get people to think that—what we have in common is fundamental, but the differences make life more interesting—then I think we'll be okay. And I still think that's still the most important thing of all. It's even more important than the right economic policy, because eventually we'll get all that stuff. We'll make mistakes; we'll correct it. But if your whole heart and mind and spirit is wrongly turned, then you can do everything else right, and you still come a cropper. You'll have problems.

So I really—I think this advance in race relations is profoundly important. I'll give you one—exhibit A was old Gordon Smith's speech for the hate crimes bill. Did you see that?

NOTE: The interview began at 5 p.m. in the Presidential Suite at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 10. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Joe Klein of the New Yorker
August 15, 2000

2000 Democratic Convention

Mr. Klein. I'll tell you what. I was nostalgic enough, and then you had to stop at McDonald's on top of it?

The President. It was nice. We didn't get much sleep last night. It was a nice setting, though, today, and it was nice last night. That convention was nice. The stage seemed more in the audience than the previous ones we've had, didn't it?

Mr. Klein. Yeah. And they were up for it, that crowd last night.

The President. They were ready, weren't they?

Mr. Klein. Yeah. If I remember correctly, in '92 there was still some skepticism in that audience, when you gave your acceptance speech. But you know, the difference between then and now is pretty——

The President. A lot of these people have been with me for 8 years now, you know. They have—a lot of those delegates—I've run into several people that tell me they were at the previous conventions, one or the other of them, going in——

Mr. Klein. How are you feeling right now?

The President. I feel fine. I'm a little tired. You know, we just—all I did in L.A. was run around and try to prepare for the speech. Except I did get to play golf one day, which was quite nice.

Mr. Klein. You did? Where?

The President. I played a public course there. What's it called? El Rancho? It's a public course

right near Hillcrest that used to be the site of the L.A. Open. They were very proud of it. They mayor wanted to play on it. The bad thing about it was lots of folks out there. It took a good while to get around, but it was really nice.

AmeriCorps

Mr. Klein. Steve said, when he called me, that you wanted to talk a little bit more about foreign policy and——

The President. There were some things we didn't talk—and I made a few notes. I don't think we said anything last time about foreign policy. I just thought you might have some questions you wanted to ask. I also thought we didn't talk much about environmental policy. And I couldn't remember whether we talked about AmeriCorps.

Mr. Klein. About AmeriCorps? Did we talk about AmeriCorps? No, we didn't. We don't have to.

The President. You know how important that is to me.

Mr. Klein. Yeah, I know how important that is.

The President. Did you see what Bush said 2 days ago?

Mr. Klein. What did he say?

The President. He said he was going to get rid of the 100,000 cops program, and he was going to take another look at AmeriCorps.

Mr. Klein. Really? But so many Republicans have turned around on that. I mean, I thought that the adjustment that you announced in Philadelphia at the voluntarism summit was just the icing on the cake for that program. That really——

The President. I think the only reason he would get rid of it is just for personal——

Mr. Klein. Did you ever hear the story about John Kasich going to Jeff Canada's program in Harlem?

The President. Yeah.

Mr. Klein. And Kasich saying, "God, you know, this is the kind of thing that AmeriCorps should be." And Jeff said to him, "Every one of those kids in there are AmeriCorps kids."

The President. And Kasich has turned around.

Foreign Policy

Mr. Klein. Yeah, Kasich has turned around. Santorum has turned around. Let me ask about—let's go to foreign policy for a minute. In going through this thing, I've now written a mere 31,000 words. Every time you have to make a decision about global economic security during the last 8 years, you make it like that. Mexico, Asia, time and time again, you seem to have a really good sense of what global economic security is about. But international security decisions seem to be tougher.

The President. Well, if you look at it, for one thing, if it's a decision that involves the use of force, almost without exception—Haiti being the exception, I guess—we have—particularly in the Balkans, we thought we had to have first a consensus within NATO and then, if possible, some sanction from the United Nations. It took us a long time to put together that consensus in Bosnia. It took a couple of years.

Mr. Klein. You were saying last time that first, especially Somalia, you hadn't—that you didn't have the procedures in place that you later would.

The President. I think Somalia was a special case. I don't feel that way about Bosnia. Bosnia was literally—Christopher went to Europe early on. We tried to build a consensus. We failed. We didn't think we should go in there unilaterally. We finally got the country to, I think, eventually—we're proud of what NATO did in Bosnia and proud of the peace process.

And ironically, we didn't have the kind of delay in Kosovo that I was afraid we'd have. You know, it actually worked out pretty well.

So I think you're going to see this from time to time where, if there's a question on the use of force, whenever possible, the American people will want the United States to act with others. And whenever possible, it would be a good thing if we do and if it's sanctioned by the U.N. or at least if there's a darn good argument that it's covered by a U.N. resolution.

But Somalia was a special case. And I hope that Somalia will never be used as an excuse for the United States not to be involved in United Nations missions. We're training those soldiers in West Africa now that are going to go into Sierra Leone, which I think is a very good thing. And we have been working, ironically, for several years on the Africa Crisis Response Initiative, trying to generally train soldiers in Africa to be ready to deal with the problems.

But what happened in Somalia, as I say, was a special case because you had—the Americans were there under U.N. command. And I think

we learned a lot from Somalia, but I think that we shouldn't overlearn it. That is, we shouldn't refuse to go into another situation with soldiers from other countries. It's just that I think, if it happened again, we would have a much clearer notion of the rules of combat. And before we would have an engagement that could literally have led to several hundred casualties on their side and 18 deaths on our side, we would have much greater involvement in the details of it.

Mr. Klein. I talked to McCain about your foreign policy and other things. He was actually very supportive in a lot of other areas, especially high-tech areas. But the argument that he made on foreign policy is one that you hear from the foreign policy priesthood all the time about your foreign policy. They use words like "ad hoc" and "untidy" and that you move from issue to issue and there isn't the kind of sustained interest in it.

He uses an example—they use the example of you calling China our strategic partner, and he says Japan's our strategic partner. What do you say to the critics who say that you haven't had a sustained and coherent foreign policy?

The President. Well, I know they say it, but I disagree. A lot of those people didn't want us to be involved in the Balkans. They didn't think it was worth it. A lot of those people didn't think we should have gone into Haiti. They didn't think it was worth it.

I think we have had a consistent policy toward China. We've had to do different things in response to developments there. I think we've had a consistent policy toward Russia, and I think that we've had—basically, if you go back to some of the foreign policy speeches we gave, I think it's obvious that we've tried to meet the new security threats of the 21st century. We have tried very hard to support a united Europe. We've tried very hard to support the development of democracy in Russia and the reduction of the nuclear threat and removal of nuclear weapons from the other states of the former Soviet Union.

We have tried to engage with China. We have tried to contain or reverse the North Korean nuclear threat, and we have supported a dialog between the North and the South. And I think the things that we did and the things that we refused to do in North Korea have some bearing on the ultimate decision of Kim Chong-il to engage Kim Dae-jung.

We had an unusual and systematic outreach to our neighbors south of our border. And I regret that one of the few defeats of my administration—legislative defeats that I really regret was the fast-track defeat which sort of slowed up our initiative in building a free-trade area in the Americas, because I think it's important. And the United States has actually paid a price for that as a lot of the South American nations have actually started doing much more business with Europe rather than the United States.

But I just frankly don't agree with him. I think that—what I think—that if they're looking for some simple explanation of the world, a lot of them didn't agree with my outreach to Africa. A lot of them didn't agree with our designation of the global AIDS crisis as a national security threat.

But I think that—I don't know if you were—I gave a few remarks kind of ad hoc to the NDI luncheon yesterday. I think that we should see our foreign policy and national security in terms of the traditional alliances and challenges that we have that haven't changed, even though the cold war is over, in terms of the new possibilities opened up either by the end of the cold war or the emergence of this sort of global information society and then the new security threats. And I think a lot of the security threats of the 21st century will come not from other nation-states but from the enemies of the nation-states.

I think that you will see a convergence of terrorists, narcotraffickers, weapons merchants, and kind of religious and racial nationalists. I think you will see a lot of that. And then I think you will see a convergence of information technology in weaponry which will lead to the miniaturization of seriously dangerous weapons, both conventional and biological and chemical weapons. And I think the likelihood is that sometime in the next 10 years, people will come to think that there will be kind of cross-national threats which will threaten our security as much as one particular other nation.

I understand why they're all saying that. But the truth is, a lot of them didn't think I was right in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Mr. Klein. They never disagree on the big picture stuff. I talked to Tony Lake, and I read the book that he has coming out in October. And one of the things he posits as a kind of a central principle of your years that was something different was the fact that we were more

threatened by the weaknesses of other countries than their strengths. Is that something you agree with?

The President. Absolutely. I think the United States can be threatened more by another nation's weakness than by its strength. And I used to tell—I don't know how many times I've said to our crowd over the last 8 years, when we're dealing with a country that has interests that are in conflict with ours, I would rather have a strong leader of that country than a weak leader, because a strong leader can make an agreement and keep it and is capable of kind of distancing himself from the more destructive elements in the relationship and within their societies. So I believe that.

I also believe—let me be more specific. We want to preserve democracy in South America. But you still need to be strong to keep Colombia from collapsing, for example. There needs to be—you have to have to have a certain amount of discipline and strength to do what Museveni did in Uganda and reverse the AIDS rate—the infection rate of AIDS. There has to be a certain amount of strength in the state to rebuild the public health systems which are breaking down all over the world.

Laurie Garrett, who wrote "The Coming Plague"—do you remember that book? She's got a new book coming out—I've just seen it in galleys—about the breakdown of public health systems all over the world, in the states of the former Soviet Union, in developing countries, and speculating what it might mean for us. You've got to have a strong state with some fair measure of strength to deal with the challenges of climate change, for example, a lot of these big questions. So I absolutely agree with that.

I think that, to take a more traditional national security problem: the continuing agony between India and Pakistan and the centrality of Kashmir to that conflict and that relationship, it would take a pretty strong Government in both countries to really come to grips with the compromises that would be required to make an agreement that would have any shot at all of putting an end to that problem and also putting an end to it as a potential trigger of nuclear exchanges.

Mr. Klein. So, is the story of Camp David II the fact that one country was stronger than the other, and they weren't able to make compromise? You don't have to answer it if it's undiplomatic.

The President. Well, I think we're using—no, because—I understand what you mean, but I don't mean it in the same sense you do.

There, Israel has land and army coherence; the Palestinian state has existed in the minds of its adherents and implicit in these U.N. resolutions. So in that sense, that's a different kind of strong and weak. That is, if you don't have land, an army, and everything, maybe you have to adhere to words and ideas more, and compromise is more difficult.

I don't mean it like that. I meant actually—but both Arafat and Barak are strong, even though Barak didn't have a big margin in the Knesset.

Mr. Klein. No, I was meaning it in the way that you were meaning it. I was wondering whether Arafat's coalition—I mean, I've been over there, and I've seen all the various—I know how good a politician he's had to be to, you know, to survive.

The President. My gut is that if the other—three or four of those other people who will take whatever—if we can affect a compromise on Jerusalem that other Arab leaders will take, he can make whatever other arrangements he wants to make.

But that's different from whether the Colombians can physically recover 30 percent of their land now in the hands of narcotraffickers and terrorists or whether the Russians can actually rebuild their health care system.

Mr. Klein. Whether the Chinese can collect taxes from Guangdong Province?

The President. Yes, that's right. Your fellow journalist Friedman, Tom Friedman, has written a lot of very interesting essays on this whole subject of the weakness of government as opposed to the strength of government threatening freedom and progress. You know. You've written a lot of very interesting pieces on it. I just come in contact with it over and over and over again. So it's something that I'm concerned about.

Public Figures and the Public

Mr. Klein. One thing my boss was really interested in. He's spent a lot of time in Russia—David Remnick. But this had nothing to do with that.

It was something that you said in the very end when we were talking last time, when we

started talking about the loss of mystery and the fact that the distance between the leader and the public has evaporated during your time as President. And you were saying that you thought that was a good thing. And I understand the point that you made. Do you remember that? Do you remember? You said——

The President. Yeah, but let me say this: I would like to make two points. Number one, I think that it's a good thing if the American people, through television or through journalistic writings, have a better, deeper sense of what a person—the Presidency, for example—not only what we're doing but why we're doing it and how it fits into the larger scheme of things and how it fits into the pattern of our lives.

And you can get enough—I think what you get out of the greater exposure and a more consistent pattern of exposure is worth as what you give up in majesty.

Mr. Klein. What you give up in majesty?

The President. Mystery or majesty. So I approve of that.

I do not believe that the kind of invasion into public figures' private lives for the stated purpose of exploring their character but for the real purpose of destroying them for some political end is a very good thing. But I think it is unlikely to occur to the extent to which you've seen it in the last 8 years again for a long time.

Mr. Klein. You don't think the Presidency has just changed forever because of that?

The President. No. For one thing, the Democrats don't have anything like the infrastructure or the stomach or the desire to do that that the Republicans do. So there will have to be an actual abuse of power in office in some way that affects the public interest.

We don't—the guys that make money—we've got a lot of rich people to support us. They wouldn't do what Scaife did. They wouldn't waste $7 million going on 15 wild goose chases to try to run somebody down. We're just not that kind of people. We're actually interested in government, and we care more about what we do with power than power.

So I think that's part of it. And I think shutting the Independent Counsel law down was part of it. Finally, when it finally was hijacked as basically the private property of the party not in the executive branch, I think its legitimacy was destroyed. So I think, if there ever comes a time again when we really need one, we'll get it, the same way we got it back in the seventies. The press and the public will say the only appropriate response is for the Attorney General to name someone or to ask the court to name someone that's clearly independent.

Mr. Klein. Even short of those kind of spectacular, disgraceful, disgusting, awful kind of investigations, the Presidency after you—the Presidency exists in people's kitchens. You've been living in our kitchens for the last 8 years.

The President. Part of that's television and part of that's my predisposition to work hard in an open fashion. So I don't—as I said, I believe the ability to share with the public at large what you're trying to do and why and to take everybody along on the journey is worth the extra exposure in terms of the price you give up. Whatever the value of the mystery is, I think it's worth it. And I think most future Presidents will attempt to establish a more—I don't know; "intimate" may be the wrong word, but you know what I'm trying to say—a more sort of closer bond with the American people not just on an emotional level but actually in terms of having them understand what you're trying to do and why.

And if you do lots of interviews, if you're real accessful, if you work crowds, if you do townhall meetings, all these things that I did, you run the risk of making mistakes and paying some price and also sort of being demystified. But I think the benefit you get from it, in terms of keeping the energy flowing through a democratic system, is quite great.

If you think about it, after the Republicans won the Congress, a lot of people thought we'd never get anything done again. But we got a big bipartisan balanced budget. We got a big bipartisan welfare reform. We got a lot of bipartisan education reforms. We've even gotten some environmental work done. We got the Safe Drinking Water Act, we got——

Conservation and Environment

Mr. Klein. An awful lot of public land. I mean, I've been through these budgets line by line over the last 3 or 4 months.

The President. I worked with—Pete Domenici and I worked together to do this Baca Ranch deal in New Mexico. It's a huge thing. And we may actually get this whole CARA legislation through where we're really trying to make the right kind of compromises with the Republicans that would, in effect, take the royalties we get

from offshore drilling and put it only into environmental preservation, buying land—a small part of it for the Federal Government but a lot of it for States—and then restoration of coastlines and all that kind of stuff. If this thing passes, it's huge.

What do you think the odds are we can pass this CARA legislation? It's a really big thing.

Chief of Staff John Podesta. It's up against some tough rightwing filibusters.

Mr. Klein. Is this last round of negotiations going to happen during the next 2 or 3 weeks?

The President. On the environmental stuff?

Mr. Klein. No, I mean the budget. Is that in the budget?

The President. No, it's a separate—it's a stand-alone bill, because it takes a funding stream that's already there and directs it only to basically long-term land preservation and conservation work at the State and local level, primarily, and the Federal level.

But the fact that some of these Republicans, including Don Young from Alaska, they're willing to work with us to institutionalize this sort of thing on a permanent basis is, I think, really encouraging.

I still believe there's a lot to be said for showing up every day, and you just keep trying to push the rock up the hill.

Reaction to Scandal

Mr. Klein. Can I say something that might piss you off? And you can even turn that off if you want.

Deputy Press Secretary Jake Siewert. We're landing. You just don't have to answer it.

Mr. Klein. When Lewinski happened, I was more pissed off at my colleagues and at the Republicans than I was at you. I'm sitting there, writing this piece, and I go through this whole section of the trench warfare, line-by-line battles that you've won against the Republicans during those 3 or 4 years. And all of a sudden, I get to Lewinski, and I got to say, I got pissed off at you. It doesn't change the bottom line of the piece——

The President. I was pissed off at me.

Mr. Klein. I was surprised. I was surprised by my own reaction to that moment because the stuff you had done you didn't get any credit for, you weren't going to get any credit for. Unless a lot of people read this piece and it changes other people's minds, you wouldn't get credit for it. But it was the stuff that you did for working people. You're probably the best President for the working people in the history of the country. And then——

The President. Robert Pear actually wrote a good story the other day about what we had done for the working poor that nobody noticed over 8 years. That's why we were able to get it done.

But I think—well, you know, for us to talk about that would require a longer conversation than we have. But I think the interesting thing was, I viewed the way they overreacted to it as sort of like the last—as the second step of the kind of purging our national life of the hardcore, rightwing aspects of the Gingrich revolution, which was the Government shutdown.

We rolled that back, and then we rolled this back, and then we had this unbelievable congressional election. And I think you see it in the tone and tenor of the Republican campaign this year. Although I told you before, I'm not sure their policies have changed very much, but at least in the tone and tenor of it, I think you can see basically a decision within their camp that, "Okay," that, you know, "we don't have to get beat a third time over this. We want to stay in."

Mr. Klein. I think we've changed, too. A little bit late for your benefit.

The President. Yes, I think so.

Mr. Klein. But I think that Bush is getting a little bit of the benefit of the fact——

The President. Huge.

Mr. Klein. ——that we've realized—that my colleagues realize that we went way overboard in '98. I mean, our poll ratings—yours——

The President. But I think it was even before that. I don't think—well, sometime we'll have more time to talk about it. But I hope that nobody will ever have to undergo what I did from 1991 through 1998 again, or at least, I hope that if it happens, the media will know that it's happened, instead of being so willing to be basically suborned by it and kind of enlisted and all these other things that happened.

In fact, if that is one result of it and it changes our politics and makes it a little less hostile and personally destructive, even if the changes last for 10 or 15 years, that would be a very good thing. I can't say that I think it would have been worth it, but it certainly would be a very good thing.

President's Best Memories

Mr. Klein. Let's end on an up. I don't want to end on that note. What's your favorite moment when you look back? What was your biggest high?

The President. Well, it's very difficult to say because we did so many things, and one of the things that—that I'm sitting here with you now. We just left the handoff deal, and I'm thinking what—I mean, it seems like I just got inaugurated the first time. I can't believe that 8 years are gone. But I knew, when we won the economic plan, that it would turn the country around economically. I felt that when we passed AmeriCorps we had a chance to create a new citizen ethic in the country, which I thought was important.

I loved going to Ireland when we made the peace there. I loved—a lot of the things we did in the Middle East meant a lot to me. You know, when we—just a lot of things.

I feel very strongly that we did the right thing with welfare reform. I think I told you, when I was at the trial lawyers' meeting the other day and I was just shaking hands, I met two women. One had a master's degree, and one had a law degree. They told me they were on welfare when I became President.

I went home—I say I went home—I went back to my political home in New Hampshire earlier this year on the eighth anniversary of my victory in the New Hampshire primary, and I met a woman in the crowd who was a nurse who had gotten some appointment from our administration and was on welfare when I got elected President.

I suppose, in a funny way, those personal encounters are the biggest highs I get. There was a guy—I don't know if you were out there when I spoke today and introduced Al and I started talking about the HOPE scholarship? There was a guy over to my left that said, "Yeah, I got one of those here." He screamed out in the audience. Because I said it would pay for the community college there. He said, "Yeah, I know. I'm there. I got one."

You know, I run into people all the time that have taken the family leave law. I met a woman the other day who told me that her sister had taken the family leave law to take care of their mother, and then she had gotten cancer and taken it and now had a clean bill of health.

And I think that in some ways, even bigger than all the 100,000 people in the street in Dublin and all of the huge emotional crowd events, when you actually look at somebody who says, here is something you did, and my life is better because of it, that's probably the most rewarding thing of all.

Mr. Klein. Well, it was 9 years ago just about now that it was just you and me and a State trooper in Maine. And it does feel like——

The President. Maine?

Mr. Klein. The State trooper was a source for the American——

The President. We also got beat in Maine. Jerry Brown won in Maine. Remember that?

Mr. Klein. I was thinking about that out there today. I was just thinking about the first time I went out with you in Maine. And I remember we were stuck on the tarmac in Boston. You had to catch a plane to Chicago. And I looked at you, and I said, "Do you realize a year from today you could be giving your acceptance speech, and you'll have a fleet of cars and Secret Service and planes to take you anywhere you want to go?" And you looked at me as if to say, you're out of your mind, boy.

The President. And now it's all over—or just beginning. A new chapter is beginning. I've got to figure out—after you write this, you ought to talk to me about what you think I ought to do next.

President's Future Plans

Mr. Klein. I have a couple of ideas. I know a guy, the guy who runs the Ford Foundation in Asia is really interested in funding ways to move new technology and biotechnology to Third World areas. He would give you a bunch of money for your collaborating on that.

The President. Well, I'm going to spend a lot of time working on that.

Mr. Klein. My guess is that, just from hearing you talk, that's the kind of stuff that floats your boat these days.

The President. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I want to do stuff that keeps my juices running.

Mr. Klein. I don't think you're going to have any problem with that.

The President. No. I'm going to have a good time. But I've got to—if my wife wins the Senate seat and my daughter stays in school, I have to make a sizeable income. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Klein. One or two speeches a month. But we've still got to play golf next year.

The President. You've got a deal. We can also play this year, if you want to come.

Mr. Klein. By the way, I broke 90 for the first time between last interview and this.

The President. That's great.

Mr. Klein. Two birdies.

The President. Two?

Mr. Klein. That meant I screwed up some other holes.

The President. That's great. If you want to come to Washington and play, I'd like that.

NOTE: The interview began at 5:55 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route from Monroe, MI, to Andrews Air Force Base, MD. In his remarks, the President referred to former Secretary of State William Christopher; and conservative philanthropist Richard Mellon Scaife. Mr. Klein referred to former National Security Adviser Anthony Lake. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 10. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on Signing Legislation on Permanent Normal Trade Relations With China

October 10, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much, Secretary Albright; Mr. Speaker; Senator Roth; Senator Moynihan; Chairman Archer; Representative Rangel. I thank you all so much for your steadfast leadership in this important cause.

I also want to thank Senator Lott and Senator Daschle in their absence and, indeed, all the Members who are here. And if you would just indulge me in one personal remark, this is probably the largest gathering of Members of Congress anywhere in Washington today, except in the Chambers of the House and Senate.

And I would like to take a moment to pay my respects to the memory of our friend Congressman Bruce Vento, who passed away earlier today, a great teacher, a great Representative, a wonderful human being.

I also want to join the previous speakers in thanking all those who worked so hard on it, Charlene Barshefsky and Gene Sperling, who accompanied her to China, and they worked on this deal until the 11th hour. We knew it would take until the 11th hour. We only hoped by then they wouldn't be too tired to tell time, so we would be able to finish.

I thank Secretaries Glickman, Summers, and Mineta; and Secretary Slater, Secretary Shalala, who are here, John Podesta and Sandy Berger. I can't thank Bill Daley and Steve Ricchetti enough for the extraordinary job they did to lead our efforts to secure passage of this initiative, along with Chuck Brain and Mary Beth Cahill.

I want to thank all the State and local officials, the retired officials and business leaders who helped us, and I would like to acknowledge two great champions of trade who I just saw in the audience, just because I'm glad to see them, former Congressman Sam Gibbons and former Congressman and Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy. Thank you both for being here.

This is a great day for the United States and a hopeful day for the 21st century world. This signing ceremony marks the culmination of efforts begun almost 30 years ago by President Nixon, built on by President Carter, who normalized our relations with China, pursued firmly by Presidents of both parties to normalize ties with China in ways that preserve our interests and advance our values.

During that time, China has grown more prosperous and more open. As the world economy becomes vastly more complex and interconnected, China's participation in it, according to the rules of international trade, has only become more important for America, for Asia, and the world. Today we take a major step toward China's entry into the World Trade Organization and a major step toward answering some of the central challenges of this new century. For trade with China will not only extend our Nation's unprecedented economic growth, it offers us a chance to help to shape the future of the world's most populous nation and to reaffirm our own global leadership for peace and prosperity.

I guess I ought to point out that our work's not over when I sign the bill. For China must